

**Minutes of the Regular Meeting
of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education
Tuesday, February 27, 2018
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA**

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Present:

Paul Sagan, Chair, Cambridge
James Morton, Vice-Chair, Boston
Katherine Craven, Brookline
Ed Doherty, Boston
Amanda Fernandez, Belmont
Margaret McKenna, Boston
Michael Moriarty, Holyoke
James Peyser, Secretary of Education
Mary Ann Stewart, Lexington
Hannah Trimarchi, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Marblehead
Martin West, Newton
Jeff Wulfson, Acting Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

Chair Sagan called to order the regular meeting of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education at 9:00 a.m. and apologized for the late start of the meeting. The members of the Board introduced themselves. Chair Sagan commented on two recent tragic events: the shooting in the high school in Parkland, Florida, and the violence in a library here in Massachusetts. He said he has asked the Acting Commissioner to review with the Board what we know about safety preparedness in our schools at a future meeting. Chair Sagan acknowledged the Department's release of data on student restraints and the state graduation and dropout results for 2016-17.

Acting Commissioner Wulfson said the new graduation and dropout data continue our positive trend. He noted the College Board has released Advanced Placement test results that ranked Massachusetts number one in the nation in terms of students who earned a score of three or higher, and added what makes that particularly gratifying is that both high performance and high levels of participation factor into the calculation. He applauded Massachusetts schools for those efforts. Acting Commissioner Wulfson commented on the release of the first edition of the restraint data, stating the information is important and also should be viewed with caution because it is the first report of this type, some issues of data quality and consistency need to be addressed in future years, and the variations in types of schools and the populations they serve make it difficult to do any direct school-to-school comparisons.

Acting Commissioner Wulfson said the Department has begun the process of reviewing and updating the 1999 Arts curriculum framework and is soliciting nominations of educators to participate in the process. He informed the Board that the Legislature has approved \$15 million for this fiscal year that Governor Baker requested to assist the districts serving students from Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands who were displaced by last fall's devastating hurricanes. The Acting Commissioner said the Department is sending instructions to the districts on reporting, and expects to make two payments: one in April and a supplemental payment at the end of the school year. He added that the federal government may provide additional funding for this purpose. Acting Commissioner Wulfson noted the work of Helene Bettencourt, Chief of Staff, who has been working with the Puerto Rico Department of Education to address various

issues including helping facilitate course credit transfers so that high school students from Puerto Rico who are in Massachusetts may qualify for a Puerto Rico diploma. He added that the Worcester and Springfield school districts are piloting a data exchange with the Puerto Rico Department of Education.

Acting Commissioner Wulfson highlighted the Department's collaboration with the Department of Higher Education (DHE) to develop new reports allowing Massachusetts high school counselors and college advisors to monitor whether students have filled out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FASFA), which will enable school personnel to follow up with students and families who need help. He thanked Secretary Peyser and DHE for their partnership.

The Acting Commissioner said the tragedy in Parkland has affected everyone in the education community; he has spoken with Tom Scott of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents and other leaders, and the Department has provided resources to districts about school safety and crisis situations. He noted the state requirement for schools to have a multi-hazard plan that addresses a variety of situations. Acting Commissioner Wulfson said he is confident that schools and districts are working with local public safety officials to update their plans and make sure all are aware of what is in those plans. In terms of prevention, he noted the work the Department is doing on social and emotional learning, the early warning indicator system, and innovative pathways programs, all of which are designed to keep students engaged and intervene with those who may be at risk.

Acting Commissioner Wulfson added that on a personal note, he believes arming teachers and placing more guns in schools is an incredibly bad idea, and he is pleased that Massachusetts educators are speaking out against it. With respect to student protests and walkouts, the Acting Commissioner said he is confident that superintendents and principals will handle this matter sensitively and appropriately. He noted that the Board has stressed the value of civic education and civic engagement for students and said this is as real as it gets, a true teachable moment.

Secretary Peyser echoed the Acting Commissioner's comments regarding school safety and school culture, noting that initiatives to strengthen social and emotional learning and promote a safe and supportive school culture can have a significant impact, even if they cannot prevent all tragedies from occurring. The Secretary said he looks forward to future discussions on this important topic.

Ms. McKenna said she appreciated the Acting Commissioner's comments about the Parkland tragedy and asked if the Department could advise school districts about student walkouts and liability issues. She agreed everyone is trying to do the right thing and it is clearly a teachable moment. Acting Commissioner Wulfson said he will confer with the superintendents' group and ask them what would be useful.

Statements from the Public

1. **Tamara Soraluz**, *Head of School of Phoenix Academy Lawrence*, addressed the Board on Recommendation for New Charter School: Phoenix Academy Public Charter School
2. **Dasani Canario**, *student of Phoenix Academy Lawrence*, addressed the Board on Recommendation for New Charter School: Phoenix Academy Public Charter School
3. **Trisha Perez Kennealy**, *current Phoenix Board of Trustees member*, addressed the

Board on Recommendation for New Charter School: Phoenix Academy Public Charter School

Mr. Doherty asked about the current staff at the school, who are Lawrence Public School employees and members of the Lawrence Teachers Union: what happens to those who do not choose to join the new school or who are not selected for it? Ms. Soraluz explained that the Lawrence Public Schools will absorb the teachers who wish to remain in the Lawrence Public Schools, as well as students who wish to remain. Mr. Doherty asked if the teachers' job security will be protected and Ms. Soraluz said that it would be protected.

4. **Rachel Romano**, *Founder & Executive Director, Veritas Preparatory Charter School*, addressed the Board on Proposed Amendment to Charter: Veritas Preparatory Charter School, Springfield
5. **Judi Crowell**, *a trustee and parent of a Veritas Prep graduate*, addressed the Board on Proposed Amendment to Charter: Veritas Preparatory Charter School, Springfield
6. **Tim Nicolette**, *Executive Director, Massachusetts Charter Public School Association*, addressed the Board on Recommendation for New Charter School: Phoenix Academy Public Charter School; Proposed Amendment to Charter: Veritas Preparatory Charter School, Springfield; and on Charter Authorizing in Lynn under Net School Spending Caps
7. **Christopher Coblyn**, *Interim Executive Director, Helen Y. Davis Leadership Academy*, addressed the Board on Proposed Charter Renewal with Probation: Helen Y. Davis Leadership Academy Charter Public School, Boston
8. **Adam Olivere** addressed the Board on Proposed Charter Renewal with Probation: Helen Y. Davis Leadership Academy Charter Public School, Boston

With respect to the comments about Helen Y. Davis Leadership Academy, Mr. Moriarty said it is difficult for the Board to absorb the new information provided by Mr. Coblyn today, and he is not sure it is feasible to delay the vote. Mr. Moriarty asked about the financial burden on the school of having to set up an escrow fund. Mr. Coblyn said he could not respond in detail but it would not be ideal. Chair Sagan invited Kevin A. Tarpley, Chair of the Helen Y. Davis Leadership Academy board of trustees, to address the Board. Mr. Tarpley said the major impact on the school if placed on probation would be the loss of its line of credit at two banks, and the school would be unable to purchase new property. In response to a question from Ms. McKenna, Acting Commissioner Wulfson confirmed that the amount to be put in escrow would be negotiated between the Department and the school.

Chair Sagan said if the charter school wanted to make a counter-argument to the probation recommendation, it should have done so earlier; bringing in new material today is not helpful to the Board or to the school's case. Chair Sagan added that the Commissioner's report raised serious concerns about the school's governance and management, how the school spent its money, and declining academic performance. Chair Sagan said he is troubled that the school chose to respond to ancillary matters and not the fundamental issues.

9. **Natasha Megie-Maddrey**, *KIPP parent*, addressed the Board on Charter Authorizing in Lynn under Net School Spending Caps
10. **Farida Graham** addressed the Board on Charter Authorizing in Lynn under Net School Spending Caps

11. **Tom Gosnell**, *President, AFT-MA*, addressed the Board on the proposal from the President to arm faculty in schools

Approval of Minutes

Chair Sagan noted two corrections that needed to be made to the minutes of the January 23, 2018 regular meeting: (1) On page 3, relating to the process for asking questions of the finalists for commissioner, the sentence should read: “Chair Sagan said each member would start with two assigned questions and have the opportunity to ask more, and he would send the revised list before Friday.” (2) One page of interview questions was missing from the minutes and should be added. General Counsel Schneider said those corrections would be made.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approves the minutes of the January 23, 2018 Joint Meeting with the Board of Higher Education, the January 23, 2018 Regular Meeting (as corrected), the January 26, 2018 Special Meeting, and the January 29, 2018 Special Meeting.

The vote was unanimous.

Update on Commissioner Transition

Chair Sagan said Secretary Peyser has appointed Jeff Riley as Commissioner, consistent with the Board’s vote on January 29, 2018. The Board had authorized Chair Sagan to negotiate the salary, terms, and conditions with Mr. Riley, and the Chair is presenting these today for the Board’s vote. Chair Sagan summarized the terms outlined in his memo to the Board. He said the proposed salary of \$241,000 is the same as former Commissioner Chester’s salary in his final year and is a two-and-a-half percent raise from Mr. Riley’s current salary as the Receiver in Lawrence, which is a modest increase for a big change in responsibilities.

Chair Sagan reviewed the additional terms: Mr. Riley’s start date will be no later than July 1, which is the end of his current contract as Receiver, but likely will be several months sooner; he will receive standard benefits as a state employee, including four weeks of vacation annually; there is a transition plan that protects both Mr. Riley and the Board; standard use of the state vehicle for official business; acknowledgement that the job requires out-of-state travel from time to time as the Board expects the Commissioner to attend events and forums as a representative of the state; and agreement that Mr. Riley may continue to teach one evening course per year at Harvard University as long as it does not conflict with his ability to perform his duties as Commissioner.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with Mass. Gen. Laws c. 15, § 1F, set the salary for Jeffrey Riley as Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education at an annual rate of \$241,000, effective as of his start date as Commissioner, and endorse the terms and conditions as set forth in the Chair’s memorandum to the Board.

The vote was unanimous.

Level 5 District and School Update

Acting Commissioner Wulfson introduced Russell Johnston, Senior Associate Commissioner; Lauren Woo, Director of the Office of Strategic Transformation; and Dr. Jeffrey Villar, the new Receiver in Southbridge, to update the Board on the Southbridge receivership and the Level 5 schools. The Acting Commissioner noted that the first meeting of the Lawrence Alliance for Education will be held this evening, Tuesday, February 27, 2018.

Dr. Villar expressed his excitement for his new role and provided background on himself and his work in the education field for the last 25 years. He said he looks forward to reporting to the Board in the future on progress in Southbridge. Mr. Johnston made a presentation on Southbridge turnaround efforts from spring 2017-winter 2018. He said we have done a lot of rebuilding within the system and offered as examples streamlining payroll and human resources operations. Mr. Johnston summarized work relating to school improvement planning, strengthening elementary literacy and dual language programs, building teacher leadership teams, and parent outreach. He discussed the change in the elementary literacy and writing assessment system and noted some promising results. He said the district has hired Open Architects, Inc, to run the financial management and business office. Mr. Johnston said next steps for Southbridge include hiring a new high school principal, balancing the FY19 budget, and secondary redesign efforts.

In response to a question from Ms. Stewart, Mr. Johnston said Southbridge continues to have a locally elected school committee that provides advice to and gets information and reports from the receiver. Dr. Villar will meet with the school committee monthly.

Ms. Craven commended Mr. Johnston on the job he has done as interim receiver and said she was concerned to hear about the issues regarding budget and human resources. She suggested receivers should have a standard checklist of items to brief the Board when they provide updates. Chair Sagan commented that he was never under the impression that things were going well in Southbridge. Mr. Moriarty commended the priorities that Mr. Johnston outlined and offered some observations from Holyoke about literacy initiatives.

Ms. Woo briefed the Board on successes and challenges in the four Level 5 Schools: Paul A. Dever Elementary School, Boston; UP Academy Holland, Boston; Morgan K-8 Full Service Community School, Holyoke; and the John Avery Parker Elementary School, New Bedford. Ms. McKenna and Mr. Moriarty noted the need to address teacher turnover and retention.

Chair Sagan thanked the panel for the update and wished Dr. Villar success in his new role. At 10:40 a.m., Chair Sagan called for a short break. He reconvened the meeting at 10:50 a.m.

Recommendation for New Charter School: Phoenix Academy Public Charter High School, Lawrence

Acting Commissioner Wulfson introduced Cliff Chuang, Senior Associate Commissioner; Alison Bagg, Director of the Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign; Alyssa Hopkins,

School Development Manager, Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign; and Patrick Buckwalter, School Development and Accountability Specialist. The Acting Commissioner explained this is the only new charter he is recommending this year. He said there is wide agreement that the Phoenix Academy network of schools has done outstanding work with underserved and at-risk students in Chelsea, Springfield, and Lawrence.

Acting Commissioner Wulfson explained that the Phoenix organization has been running a school under contract with the Lawrence Public Schools, and after much discussion and with the encouragement of Superintendent Riley and Lawrence Public Schools staff, the Phoenix board decided to seek a Commonwealth charter to allow the school to serve students from throughout the region. The Acting Commissioner said he is pleased to recommend this new charter to the Board.

Chair Sagan and Ms. Stewart reported on the public hearing they attended. Chair Sagan said 34 people, including Jeff Riley, spoke in favor of the new charter. Ms. Stewart said students and alumni of the school spoke eloquently at the hearing in favor of the school. She added that the school provides a valuable model.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with General Laws chapter 71, section 89, and 603 CMR 1.00, and subject to the conditions set forth below, hereby grants a charter to the following school, as recommended by the Commissioner.
Commonwealth Charter (Regional):

Phoenix Academy Public Charter High School, Lawrence	
Location:	Lawrence
Charter Region:	Lawrence, Haverhill, Methuen
Maximum Enrollment:	250
Grade Levels:	9-12
Opening Year:	FY2019

The charter school shall be operated in accordance with the provisions of General Laws chapter 71, section 89; 603 CMR 1.00; and all other applicable state and federal laws and regulations and such conditions as the Commissioner or the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education may establish, all of which shall be deemed conditions of the charter.

The vote was unanimous.

Proposed Amendment to Charter: Veritas Preparatory Charter School, Springfield

Acting Commissioner Wulfson presented an overview of his recommendation for an expansion of the Veritas Preparatory Charter School, Springfield. Cliff Chuang, Senior Associate Commissioner; Alison Bagg, Director of the Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign; and Brenton Stewart, School Development and Data Specialist were at the table to answer questions.

The Acting Commissioner noted this is the second time Veritas has requested an expansion; the school asked for a larger expansion a couple of years ago and has now come back with a more modest proposal that is a right-sizing of the school based on its academic model.

Acting Commissioner Wulfson acknowledged that Superintendent Warwick of Springfield is opposed to expanding the charter school. The Acting Commissioner said he believes competition and choice are healthy and there is room for excellence on both sides. Vice-Chair Morton said that on advice of Department counsel, he would recuse himself from participating in this matter because he serves as a member of the Springfield Empowerment Zone Board. Acting Commissioner Wulfson and Ms. Hopkins responded to a question from Ms. Stewart about the net school spending cap and how it affects Springfield.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with General Laws chapter 71, section 89, and 603 CMR 1.00, hereby amends the Commonwealth charter granted to the following school, as presented by the Commissioner:

Veritas Preparatory Charter School (enrollment increase from 324 to 432)

Location:	Springfield
Maximum Enrollment:	432
Grades Served:	5-8
Effective year:	FY2019

Veritas Preparatory Charter School shall be operated in accordance with the provisions of General Laws chapter 71, section 89, and 603 CMR 1.00 and all other applicable state and federal laws and regulations and such additional conditions as the Commissioner may from time to time establish, all of which shall be deemed conditions of the charter.

The motion carried with 8 members in favor and none opposed. Vice-Chair Morton, Mr. Doherty, and Ms. Stewart abstained.

Acting Commissioner Wulfson acknowledged the frustration expressed during public comment about not recommending a new charter or expansion of an existing charter school in Lynn because Lynn is no longer in the lowest 10 percent for district performance. He said this is frustrating for the applicant groups and for the Department. Referring to the informational memo he provided to the Board, he said Massachusetts has a complicated system of charter school caps tied to factors that fluctuate, including net school spending and academic performance. The Acting Commissioner said the Department does its best to manage the process, and it does not take a big swing in performance for a district to move into or out of the lowest 10 percent. He said if he were to recommend seats now, these seats would disappear next year.

Acting Commissioner Wulfson said he has asked Department staff from the Charter School and School Finance offices to work with stakeholder groups to review our administrative process, timeline, and regulations to see if we could do anything, short of amending the statute, to make this process smoother. He noted there is no appetite in the Legislature to reopen any part of the

statute that has to do with the caps.

Acting Commissioner Wulfson said his decision not to recommend a new charter or expansion of an existing charter does not reflect on the groups involved or the merits of their proposals; we simply do not have leeway under the statute. Chair Sagan said the Board appreciates the efforts of the groups and understands the frustration of the parents, but we have to follow the law. He added that he is not sure what the solution is but the Board and Commissioner will continue to seek a solution.

Ms. McKenna commented that we were in this situation four years ago and said we would not let it happen again. She asked if anything could be done in terms of timing to avoid this problem, or to make clear that that some situations are on the bubble and the Department may not have a choice. Acting Commissioner Wulfson said it was disappointing to hear people say they did not know districts could come out of the lowest 10 percent because that concept is basic to how charter schools work in Massachusetts. Mr. Chuang noted the fundamental problem is we cannot predict spending and academic performance two years in advance. Mr. West said charter schools need to do outreach with families if the charter is hoping to open or expand the following year. Acting Commissioner Wulfson said families may not understand the nuances of charter school authorizing, and schools and applicant groups need to be clear that while they have asked for the seats, the seats have not yet been granted.

Proposed Charter Renewal with Probation: Helen Y. Davis Leadership Academy Charter Public School, Boston

Acting Commissioner Wulfson said he recommends that the Board renew the charter of Helen Y. Davis Leadership Academy Charter Public School with probation and conditions. The Acting Commissioner asked Cliff Chuang, Senior Associate Commissioner; Alison Bagg, Director of the Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign; Alyssa Hopkins, School Development Manager, Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign; and Claire Smithney, Coordinator of Accountability, to summarize the reasons for the recommendation. He acknowledged the comments from the Helen Y. Davis Leadership Academy Charter Public School Executive Director, Chris Coblyn.

The Acting Commissioner said the State Auditor is currently reviewing the school and expects to issue a report later this spring. Acting Commissioner Wulfson said the school is not where it should be after having operated for 15 years. He added that he hopes the school's board and leadership take these recommendations to heart; probation is a serious matter, and the probation could be lifted if the school meets the conditions.

Vice-Chair Morton stated that on advice of Department counsel and in the interest of transparency, he would like to state for the record that Moriarty & Primack, an accounting firm in Springfield, did the financial audit for Helen Y. Davis Leadership Academy; and Patrick Leary, a partner in that accounting firm, was a member of the board of the Springfield YMCA, served on the executive committee, and chaired the finance committee, when Vice-Chair Morton was President/CEO of the Springfield YMCA. Vice-Chair Morton said this does not affect his decision on the Commissioner's recommendation in any way, but he wants it on the record.

Staff summarized the concerns outlined in the memo, including governance issues and declines

in academic performance. Acting Commissioner Wulfson noted that Mr. Coblyn is a newly appointed Executive Director who took over in the fall of 2017, and the Department views his appointment as a positive step. Chair Sagan asked the Department to work with the school to be sure the escrow amount is reasonable; he encouraged the school to work closely with the Department to make the necessary improvements and said he wants the school to succeed.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED: **that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with General Laws chapter 71, section 89, and 603 CMR 1.12(2), hereby renews the charter of Helen Y. Davis Leadership Academy Charter Public School for the five-year period from July 1, 2018, through June 30, 2023, and place the school on probation with conditions on the school's charter, as recommended by the Commissioner:**

- 1. Until further notice, DLA must submit to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department), at charterschools@doe.mass.edu or 75 Pleasant St., Malden, MA 02148, board and committee meeting agendas, materials, and minutes prior to each board meeting at the same time that these items are sent to the school's board members. Additionally, if board materials do not already include this information, the school must also submit monthly financial statements, including cash flow. The documents must reflect adherence to the Open Meeting Law.**
- 2. By March 30, 2018, the school must establish an escrow account in an amount determined by the Department in consultation with the school to pay for any potential closing, legal, and audit expenses associated with closure, should that occur.**
- 3. By April 18, 2018, all members of the board of trustees must participate in training on the Open Meeting Law offered by the Office of the Attorney General. In addition, all members of the board of trustees must participate in training on state ethics offered by the State Ethics Commission.**
- 4. By May 31, 2018, the board of trustees will work with the Department to obtain approval of its bylaws.**
- 5. By June 1, 2018, the school must submit to the Department a comprehensive evaluation of its mathematics, English language arts, and science programs. Such comprehensive evaluation must be conducted by an external consultant(s) acceptable to and approved in advance by the Department.**
- 6. By June 29, 2018, the school must submit to the Department for approval an action plan to improve academic performance. Such action plan must specify the strategies to improve mathematics, English language arts, and science performance for all student groups. The action plan must set clear and specific implementation benchmarks, with a clear timetable and deadlines for completion of key tasks sufficient to allow the school's board of trustees and the Department to monitor implementation.**

7. By July 1, 2018, the board of trustees must assess its capacity and expertise, taking into consideration current term limits for existing board members, and add membership that will allow the board to fulfill its governance duties.
8. By December 31, 2019, the school must demonstrate that it is an academic success by providing evidence that the school has exhibited significant and sustained academic improvement in mathematics, English language arts, and science.

Failure of Helen Y. Davis Leadership Academy Charter Public School to meet the conditions placed on renewal of its charter may result in immediate suspension and revocation of the school's charter. The Commissioner shall review and report to the Board on the success or lack of success of Helen Y. Davis Leadership Academy Charter Public School in meeting the terms of probation and its charter and, based upon his review, shall recommend such further action as he deems appropriate.

Commonwealth Charter School:

Helen Y. Davis Leadership Academy Charter Public School	
Location:	Boston
Districts in Region:	Boston
Maximum Enrollment:	216
Grade levels:	6-8

In addition to meeting the terms of probation, Helen Y. Davis Leadership Academy Charter Public School, like all charter schools, must comply with the terms of its charter. Helen Y. Davis Leadership Academy Charter Public School shall be operated in accordance with the provisions of General Laws chapter 71, section 89, 603 CMR 1.00, and all other applicable state and federal laws and regulations and such additional conditions as the Commissioner may from time to time establish, all of which shall be deemed conditions of the charter.

The vote was unanimous.

Amendments to Regulations on MCAS and Competency Determination, 603 CMR 30.00, for Transition to New Standard

Acting Commissioner Wulfson presented an overview of the proposed amendments to the regulations on MCAS and the Competency Determination (CD). He introduced Michol Stapel, Associate Commissioner, and Lucy Wall, Legal Counsel. The Acting Commissioner noted the Board discussed these changes most recently in November 2017, when the Board voted to send them out for public comment. He said the amendments would establish the interim CD standard for students in the classes of 2021 and 2022, adding that the class of 2021 will participate in the first administration of the next-generation 10th grade MCAS tests about a year from now, in the spring of 2019.

Acting Commissioner Wulfson said the amended regulations will hold students in these classes to an interim passing standard: a similar level of achievement to the current required standard in the legacy tests. This will ensure fairness for students during this transitional period and allow the Board to consider the next-generation test results before setting a new CD standard for the classes of 2023 and beyond. Acting Commissioner Wulfson said we need to give plenty of notice in changing the CD requirements. He said the proposed regulations have been out for public comment and he has talked to the MASS and other associations about this; all the feedback he has received from superintendents and principals has been positive.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with G.L. c. 69, §§ 1B and 1D, and having solicited public comment in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, G.L. c. 30A, § 3, hereby adopts the amendments to the Competency Determination Regulations, 603 CMR 30.00, as presented by the Commissioner.

The amendments establish an interim passing standard in English language arts and mathematics for students in the classes of 2021 and 2022. The amendments also update outdated language and references in the regulations.

The vote was unanimous.

State Graduation and Dropout Results for 2016-2017

Acting Commissioner Wulfson introduced Associate Commissioner Rob Curtin. Mr. Curtin gave the Board an overview of the 2017 cohort graduation rate and dropout rate data, which he described as good news. Mr. Curtin explained how the graduation rate is calculated. He noted that the 2017 4-year cohort graduation rate increased to 88.3 percent, which is a .8 percentage point increase from the 2016 cohort, and the 2016 5-year cohort graduation rate increased to 89.8 percent, which is a .4 percentage point increase from 2015.

Chair Sagan asked Mr. Curtin how this compares to other states. Mr. Curtin explained it is difficult to do comparisons due to the use of different methodologies. He noted the steady improvement over the 11 consecutive years that Massachusetts has been calculating graduation rates, adding that all the major racial and ethnic groups have increased their 2017 4-year graduation rate. Mr. Curtin noted that graduation rate gaps are also narrowing, with a 39 percent decrease in the graduation rate gap between White and African-American students and a 35 percent decrease between White and Hispanic students. He said educators across the Commonwealth should be lauded for their efforts.

Mr. Curtin explained how the annual dropout rate is calculated and highlighted the 55 percent reduction in the number of dropouts since 2007. He said while 5,172 is still too many students dropping out, this is the lowest dropout rate we have on record: 1.8 percent from grades 9-12 across the Commonwealth. Mr. Curtin concluded by explaining that dropout rate gaps are narrowing, with over a 50 percent reduction in the dropout rate for both Hispanic and African-American students as compared to White students since 2007. In response to a question from Mr. Moriarty, Mr. Curtin described various strategies and pathways that schools are using to keep students engaged. Acting Commissioner Wulfson noted that MCAS testing is not a major factor

in the dropout rate; most students who have dropped out have already passed the high school MCAS tests. Mr. Moriarty suggested the Department look at post-high school data, including from the military. Chair Sagan said the reports are very encouraging and the numbers are going in the right direction, although there is still a lot of work to do.

Governor's State Education Budget Proposal for FY2019

Bill Bell, Senior Associate Commissioner, and Julia Jou, Budget Director, gave the Board an overview of Governor Baker's FY19 education budget recommendations. Mr. Bell explained the Department is working on getting the FY18 supplemental budget funds to the districts serving students from Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. He said the FY19 budget proposal continues the Administration's commitment to local aid. Mr. Bell noted the recommendation to increase the Special Education Circuit Breaker reimbursement account by almost \$10 million.

Mr. Bell highlighted the consolidated account for Literacy and English Language Acquisition, the transfer of the Recovery High Schools program to the Department from the Department of Public Health, and the increase of \$1 million to the Student Assessment line item to support implementation of the new history and social science standards and the development of assessments in history and social science. Mr. Bell added on the federal side, the recent agreement on a two-year budget deal makes federal funding more predictable, and we anticipate level funding.

Secretary Peyser noted that the Chapter 70 increase includes a \$25 million increase in contributions towards health care costs, based on a recommendation of the Foundation Budget Review Commission. The Secretary also highlighted another \$3 million in the Department's budget for early college, which the Governor proposed in order to support this initiative.

Mr. Doherty said he assumes the Board opposes President Trump's recommendation to arm school teachers and asked that a strong resolution be drafted in opposition to having more guns in schools. He said we could share this resolution with our political leaders, schools, and other boards of education across the country and encourage them to adopt similar resolutions. Chair Sagan said personally he agrees with Mr. Doherty and would like to hear from the Department and school and law enforcement officials about school safety policies and programs in the state. Acting Commissioner Wulfson said he would follow up.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 12:00 noon, subject to the call of the Chair.

The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeff Wulfson
Acting Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education
and Secretary to the Board